

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

silently witnessed the struggle between the duck and the snake. It took approximately an hour

for the Python to swallow its prey, after which it disappeared into the grass covered, waters.

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20. A COUCAL-PYTHON INCIDENT

On the morning of 27th April 1984, at about 7.30 a.m., we were walking down the metal topped road running across the Keoladeo National Park at Bharatpur, Rajasthan. On both sides stretched the vast grassy wetlands dotted here and there with planted acacia trees. Suddenly one of us saw a black creature thrashing about in the midst of the marsh about 50 feet away from the road. We were puzzled to see a ring of about 20 Egrets and Pond Herons watching the creature, which was apparently in great distress. On closer examination, it turned out to be a coucal *Centropus sinensis* (Stephens) being strangled by a young Python *Python molurus* (Linnaeus) about 125 cm long.

For the next two hours we observed the one-sided battle between the reptile and the bird. The snake tried its best to swallow the bird but, being a young one, all its efforts were

in vain. From a distance of a few feet away, we observed the python widening its gape now and then to the utmost extent, yet the prey could not be swallowed. At one stage, it indeed appeared that the bird would be injected but the bill acted as a hindrance.

At the very beginning the coucal showed signs of life but eventually, it died due to the relentless strangling. The snake coiled itself around the bird and squeezed it to such an extent that the normally stout bird looked slender.

Finally at 10 a.m. the python let go its prey and disappeared into the water. Obviously the coucal was too large for it to tackle.

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